

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Customer experience means understanding clients' needs

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The Pierre is one of New York's most iconic hotels. Image credit: The Pierre

By SARAH RAMIREZ

NEW YORK A client's experience can be defined within the first 30 seconds of interaction with a brand, making first impressions pivotal.

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During a presentation at LuxeCX/AMCX 2019 on Sept. 25, the general manager of Taj Hotels' The Pierre shared his facts-based approach to customer experience. Feedback from consumers often gathered through social media is essential for understanding what parts of the hotel experience resonate.

"We can't just concentrate on service," said Franois-Olivier Luiggi, general manager at **The Pierre**. "You need facts.

"How do people see the hotel through their own eyes?" he said.

LuxeCX/AMCX 2019 was produced by Luxury Daily and sister title American Marketer, with venue sponsor UBS

Luxury legacy

The Pierre opened in 1930 and is approaching its 90th anniversary. Over the course of the hotel's decorated history, it has welcomed Hollywood stars and fashion icons, and it has been featured in classic films.

"The Pierre's first influencers were Hollywood stars," Mr. Luiggi said.

According to Mr. Luiggi, more upstart brands are trying to convince consumers their products are worth luxury prices. The Pierre leverages its heritage, New York location and service to differentiate itself as true luxury.

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An exceptional life, isn't that what it's all about? . . . #ThePierre #ThePierreHotel #ThePierreNY #NewYorkHotels #FifthAvenue #FiveStarHotels #Tajness #TajHotels

A post shared by The Pierre, A Taj Hotel (@thepierreny) on Oct 1, 2019 at 11:30am PDT

Elevator operators interact directly with guests

The Pierre also looks to brand partnerships to maintain relevancy and standout in a competitive market. For instance, *Vogue* magazine followed Lady Gaga's preparations at The Pierre ahead of the 2019 Met Gala.

"If you can find the right brands to partner with, it can lead to great success," Mr. Luigi said.

Social media, particularly Instagram, is also critical for Mr. Luigi and his team to track what stands out for guests. Many will share photos from their arrival, underscoring his belief that first impressions shape the experience.

Other popular sites for guests to photograph include The Pierre's terraces and tall windows overlooking Central Park.

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A post shared by ChristineB. | Travel | Inspo (@christinebottross) on Sep 19, 2019 at 5:55am PDT

The hotel keeps track of what guests share on social media

Before ever setting foot in the hotel lobby, consumers will also use social media to familiarize themselves with The Pierre brand and experience.

Mr. Luiggi revealed that many brides will book their weddings at The Pierre and already are familiar with how the chefs prepare the menu and where to take photographs, all from their own research through social media.

Hotel experiences

Although guests look at others for travel inspiration, they still expect personalized service.

To prepare for the travelers of the future, luxury hospitality brands need to streamline their services and offerings from beginning to end.

According to Phocuswire and Amadeus Hospitality, incorporating more streamlined technology will help larger hotel groups offer improved personal service. While improving technology, including Web sites and mobile applications, should be a priority for brands, it is unlikely digital tools will displace in-person hospitality ([see story](#)).

However, hospitality is no longer a separate luxury category, as every brand must find ways to incorporate experience and service into their offerings, according to an executive from Bond Brand Loyalty.

During a panel discussion hosted by the Luxury Marketing Council on Jan. 24, speakers concurred that the luxury business needs to adapt to new pressures and evolving consumer behavior and mindsets. Even with the rise in digitization, the panelists agreed that luxury still needs a human touch ([see story](#)).

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